

62-2855/2

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT  
FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

**SUBJECT: Early Warning of "Cold War Crisis Situations"**

1. In September 1961, as you will recall, the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) instituted, with the approval of the President, a "Weekly Survey of Cold War Crisis Situations" to meet the requirement indicated in Recommendation No. 4 of the 2 July 1961 Report of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. The Survey has been prepared and issued regularly, since that time, along the lines set forth in a memorandum forwarded to you on 21 August 1961.

2. I referred in my recent memorandum for the President on "Early Warning in National Intelligence" to the function of the Survey in the grey area between the immediate capabilities of current intelligence and the longer range judgments of national estimates and noted that steps had been taken to improve this warning mechanism.

3. In that connection I invite your attention to the attached new terms of reference for the Survey adopted by USIB on 18 April 1962. As provided therein, a wider range of crisis potentialities will be considered in the course of producing the Survey to improve warning coverage in the spectrum between current intelligence and national estimates. The Survey will continue, however, to retain principles of brevity and selectivity.

4. While I believe that existing arrangements for reporting foreign intelligence to the President and to the members of his staff are now

sufficiently comprehensive and flexible to permit adequate reporting of crises situations and have so informed the President. I look forward to discussions with you and other appropriate White House officials regarding possible improvement in our service to the President and the National Security Council.

JOHN A. McCONE  
Director

Attachment

cc: Chairman, President's Foreign  
Intelligence Advisory Board

Typed in USIB/S, 24 April 1962

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Executive File  
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**MEMORANDUM FOR THE MILITARY REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE PRESIDENT**

**SUBJECT: Early Warning of "Cold War Crisis Situations"**

1. In light of your interest in the function and early warning capabilities in the cold war area of the "Weekly Survey of Cold War Crisis Situations", I wish to invite your attention to the attached new terms of reference for the Survey which have been developed and approved by the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) as a means of improving warning coverage in the spectrum between current intelligence (e.g., the Central Intelligence Bulletin) and the longer range judgments of national estimates (both NIEs and SNIEs).
2. As indicated in those terms of reference, a wider range of crisis potentialities will be considered by the intelligence community in the process of producing the Survey. It will be noted, however, that the principles of brevity and selectivity will be retained.
3. While I believe that existing arrangements for reporting foreign intelligence to the President and to the members of his staff are now sufficiently comprehensive and flexible to permit adequate reporting of crises situations and have so informed the President, I look forward to discussions with you and other appropriate White House officials regarding possible improvement in our service to the President and the National Security Council.

**JOHN A. McCONE**  
Director

Attachment

Typed in USIB/S, 24 April 1962

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Terms of Reference for the Weekly Survey  
of Cold War Crisis Situations\*

A. Background

1. The Survey was formally established, after a trial period, by USIB action of 14 September 1961 (USIB-D-28.4/2, 30 August; USIB-D-28.4/3, 11 September; USIB-M-172, item 2.c.) to provide systematic early warning of developing "cold war" crisis situations in any area of the world. The term "cold war" was used to distinguish this function from the "hot war" early warning function of the Watch Committee and was not intended to restrict consideration to situations in which there is a direct Sino-Soviet involvement. From the start, it has been agreed that the Survey will take the form of a written, coordinated weekly issuance, discussed and approved by USIB.

B. The Warning Function

2. The early warning function of national intelligence in the cold war area has two main objectives:

a. To alert senior officials of developing crisis situations which may threaten serious harm to US interests (or which may hold promise of important advantage for the US) in time for anticipatory planning and action, and

b. to warn of significant impending developments in such a way as to minimize the chances that senior officials will be taken by surprise when such developments occur.

3. The Survey is but one of three categories of publication that are required to carry out the early warning function of national intelligence in the cold war area. More specifically, the Survey is not a substitute

\*Approved by the United States Intelligence Board on 18 April 1962.

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for either the day-to-day coverage and immediate warning function of the Central Intelligence Bulletin nor for the more deliberate and longer range judgments rendered in NIEs and SNIEs. The distinction does not relate to importance of subject matter but to frequency of publication, extent, depth and emphasis of coverage, and a complex of other established consumer requirements. Clearly, all three kinds of publication should strive to meet both of the warning objectives defined in the preceding paragraph so far as each can, but each has been evolved in response to a different need, and each has different capabilities and limitation.

4. The Survey deals with a grey area between current intelligence and national estimates with respect to mode of treatment, criteria of selectivity, and timing of warning. It is, in effect, a vehicle for the coordination and dissemination of brief judgments of import to top officials concerning foreseeable crisis situations or significant changes in existing situations. It is further useful for quick coordination and dissemination of interim USIB judgments on entirely new situations. (Depending on needs, these may or may not be followed up by more deliberate estimative studies in depth through the NIE or SNIE process). It has occasional utility as a means of conveying USIB estimative comment on situations of current interest which top level consumers might expect to become critical, even though the USIB judgment is that a critical development is not likely. Finally, it provides, in the Annex, a continuing checklist of existing critical situations, including brief estimative judgments where desirable, and citations to relevant national estimates, on the books or forthcoming. To supplement the coverage in this weekly Annex, the USIB will issue a series of Regional Estimative Reviews for retention by recipients of the Survey (see paragraph 16 below).

5. On occasion, the Survey and the Watch Committee may both report on the same situation. Such occasional duplication of coverage is considered preferable to accepting a chance that the situation might go unreported because each group expected the other to cover it. Moreover, the two reports would be from different points of view, the Survey concentrating on the cold war aspects of the matter, the Watch Committee on the possibility of its developing into "hostile action by the Sino-Soviet Bloc".

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C. General Criteria

6. Selection of items to be included in the Survey is a matter of responsible judgment by the intelligence community, and precise criteria cannot take the place of a reasonable exercise of discretion in the light of week-to-week developments and the receipt of intelligence evidence. Nonetheless, certain essential principles or requirements stand paramount. Among these are:

a. The Survey is designed to serve officials of the top echelons of the government.

b. As such, it must retain characteristics of brevity, generalization of treatment, and selectivity.

c. It is not a current intelligence publication; and the prompt reporting and day-to-day analysis of developments of cold war significance, the function of the Central Intelligence Bulletin, will be reflected in the Survey primarily as the week's developments give rise to new or newly foreseeable situations, or modify essential judgments about existing or previously noted situations.

d. It is not designed to duplicate the warning function of NIEs in assessing in depth the outlook for a number of likely, though probably not imminent crises--e.g., South Africa. However, it may be used to remind and focus attention on such problems if the outlook or imminence is changed significantly by new developments or new evidence.

7. There are three general criteria bearing on the selection of subjects for inclusion in the Survey which are useful in forestalling recurrent tendencies to point the finger in too many directions. These criteria relate to importance, likelihood, and imminence:

a. Importance: To be included, a situation should be of the kind that might reasonably be expected to engage the attention of the most senior US officials. If it is susceptible of contingency planning or action to prevent or to exploit, that fact argues further in favor of its inclusion.

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b. Likelihood: The Survey must frequently deal in "possibilities" rather than confine itself to "probabilities", since early warning of trouble (or opportunity), if it is to be effective, must often precede receipt of firm indications that a given development has in fact become "likely". Nonetheless, this need is not to be construed as warrant for omnibus inclusion of all conceivable important events.

c. Imminence: On this score, it is in general the function of the Survey to take into account situations which, in the community's judgment, should be in the mind or called to the attention of the reader that week. On a spectrum ranging from the immediate warning capabilities of current intelligence to the long-range capabilities of national estimates, the Survey occupies an intermediate position primarily dealing in weeks or months rather than in years or hours.

8. The three points just discussed are put forward as useful ways of thinking about the selection process and not as ready answers to all questions that arise in it. Some situations will plainly be excluded on one or more of these grounds; other situations clearly will pass on all three tests. In the less clear cases, reliance must be had on the judgment of the community, recognizing that the process is a pragmatic one and as much an art as a science.

9. In terms of maintaining alertness and a sense of urgency, both in the field and at headquarters, concerning possible crisis situations, the process of preparing the Survey is no less important than the published product. With this in mind, the initial draft of the Survey will include a list of possible situations, regarding which it appears desirable to review carefully the evidence and to bring to bear in the coordination process the best judgments of the participating agencies. Such a list will be prepared within CIA and agency representatives are requested to add proposals to it as their evidence warrants (see below, paragraph 18). \*

\*Pursuant to Priority National Intelligence Objective II A, the community will concert on standing requirements to the field for more systematic and closer review and reporting of possible crisis situations.

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D. Format

10. The Survey is divided into two sections and an Annex. Emergent situations not previously identified as potentially critical are treated in Section I. Changes in previously identified situations are treated in Section II if of sufficient importance to alter the estimative judgments previously rendered. The Annex is a checklist of situations previously identified as critical or potentially so and regarding which there is no change to report of sufficient estimative significance to highlight in Section II.

11. It is Section I that performs the early warning function of the Survey. Section II and the Annex perform the corollary function of keeping track of those situations regarding which warning has been given.

12. It is not the function of Section II to provide a running account of week-to-week developments in situations already identified as potentially critical. (That is the function of current intelligence.) An entry should be made in Section II only when there has been a change in the situation (or in our appreciation of the situation) so substantial as to warrant its reassessment. In such cases, the object of the entry is not to report current happenings, but to present a new estimative appreciation.

13. The Annex is a checklist of those situations previously discussed and which, in the community's judgment, are still considered critical. It is not a listing of chronically unstable situations which should be of continuing concern even though no specific critical development is foreseen. With respect to well-known critical situations (e. g., Berlin, Laos) it is normally sufficient to name the subject and to cite any still-valid NIE relating to it. In less well-known cases, however, or when there is no valid NIE to cite, a brief textual entry is normally desirable.

14. In order to keep the Survey brief and manageable, and specifically to avoid filling the Annex with a long (and self-defeating) list of chronically unstable situations, it will be the duty of the working group regularly to review the list with an eye to which previously identified crisis situations can be deleted. No precise rules for deletion can be formulated in advance, but the general guide will be to propose deletion if and when the crisis has passed or the specific critical developments which prompted inclusion of the situation initially have failed to materialize within a reasonable time and appear unlikely to do so.



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15. It is recognized that the process of periodic deletion involves the dilemma that a situation might be deleted, for good apparent cause, only to turn suddenly critical shortly thereafter. This is particularly applicable in situations involving coups and conspiracies, where there cannot be full assurance that our evidence is complete. It also applies to sudden actions or events which, by their very nature, are unforeseeable. This risk is inherent in the necessary process of selection, and it is preferable to incur such a risk rather than weaken the effectiveness of the warning process by continually crying wolf.

16. This dilemma can, however, be resolved in part, and the warning capabilities of national intelligence generally increased, by instituting a system of Regional Estimative Reviews, which will be distributed for retention to recipients of the Survey and which will represent the coordinated view/ of the community concerning the kind of possible change which is to be expected in a given region, state by state, sooner or later. Such regional estimative reviews will, in the first instance, be undertaken for the areas of the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa. They will be redone as deemed desirable by the USIB in the light of area developments over a period of time, but it is not anticipated that these will be of frequent issuance. These reviews will be undertaken through the regular estimative machinery.

#### E. Responsibilities and Procedures

17. The task of preparing the draft Survey for USIB consideration is assigned to the Board of National Estimates in cooperation with specified officers of other components of CIA, and in coordination with designated USIB representatives. This assignment of responsibility does not constitute a new USIB subcommittee. It is not intended to establish a new warning organization but to use existing machinery more systematically. To this end, it is agreed that each participating USIB agency and component of CIA will designate one or more officer(s) together with one or more alternate(s) as having responsibility, as a matter of priority, for the screening of possibilities and the review of proposals within his own agency and in the coordination of the Survey.

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18. The tight schedule of production, and the desirability of allowing maximum time for review of the draft in the agencies, require that the first draft leave ONE as early as possible on Monday. In practice, it is usually possible to send this out by special courier between 1300 and 1400. Given typing and reproduction requirements, as well as ONE's need to consider its proposals in relation to those submitted by other agencies or CIA components, it is essential that agency proposals for the first draft (either finished text or at least general indications of subject and content) be received in ONE not later than 1100 on Monday. With prior notice to the designated ONE office, classified text can be transmitted via the grey phone system.

19. The draft distributed on Monday must include any text submitted by any representative. On occasion, this requirement will result in the inclusion of alternative treatments of the same subject.

20. CIA will make every effort to incorporate in the Monday draft finished text for items which in the Board's view should be included in the Survey. Obviously, exceptions to this rule will occur, arising from very fast moving situations, from the occurrence of entirely new situations or the receipt of entirely new evidence on others. Except in very urgent cases, however, the representatives will not be expected to act on any material not included in the list of possibilities or the text circulated in the Monday draft or in the preceding edition of the Survey.

21. In cases where the representatives are unable to reach agreement on whether an item should be included in the Survey (or deleted from the Annex), or in cases where there is an unresolvable substantive difference of view among the representatives, the matter will be handled as analogous cases are handled in the preparation of NIEs. If the matter cannot be resolved by the USIB, dissenting member(s) have the right to define their dissent in a footnote according to the usages established in the estimative process.

22. While adherence to established rules and conventions, as set forth above, serves to facilitate the normal conduct of business, the preparation of the Survey remains essentially dependent on the exercise of responsible judgment and discretion, and no convention can properly be cited as a bar to the exercise of such judgment as occasion may require it.